

Community Assistantship Program

Analysis of the Proposed Mill Towns Trail

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Analysis of the Proposed Mill Towns Trail

Conducted on behalf of
Mill Towns Trail

Prepared by
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CAP Report 001

CURA RESOURCE COLLECTION

**Center for Urban and Regional Affairs
University of Minnesota
330 Humphrey Center**

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Introduction

The Mill Towns Trail is both a non-profit organization and the name of the proposed trail from Faribault to Cannon Falls. The Mill Towns Trail is intended to connect the Sakatah/Singing Hills and the Cannon Valley Trails. This analysis focuses on two sections of the intended Mill Towns Trail. They are the sections from the City of Faribault to the City Dundas, and from the City of Northfield to the Village of Waterford. When completed these sections will complete the trail between Faribault and the Village of Waterford. The following is an economic analysis, construction plan, and management plan for the proposed sections of the Mill Towns Trail.

Economic Analysis for the Mill Towns Trail

This economic analysis shows the costs and benefits to the state and local (cities and counties) economies of developing two sections of trail from Faribault to Dundas and Northfield to the Village of Waterford.

BENEFITS

The benefits of a multi-use trail are numerous, ranging from intangibles such as community pride and a sense of space to quantifiable indicators like the dollar amount spent by trail users per visit. For purposes of requesting a \$3.5 million grant from the State Legislature of Minnesota the quantifiable indicators from four trails that are similar or adjacent to the Mill Towns Trail will be used to project the economic benefits of the trail to local and state economies. The four trails include the Cannon Valley Trail, the Sakatah/Singing Hills Trail, the Heritage Trail, and the Root River Trail. Please note that throughout this analysis 1999 dollars are used to maintain constant dollar values and to account for the cancellation of the 3% inflation and a 3% discount rate in estimates of future tax dollars. The benefits discussed in this analysis are listed in Appendix 1.

Trail Use

Trail usage is represented by visitor use days per year and is a primary factor in determining the economic benefit generated by a trail. A visitor use day represents one person on the trail for up to one day. The estimated annual visitor use days of the Mill Towns Trail, within five years of completion, is 100,000 days per year. This projection is based on the estimated visitor use days of the Cannon Valley Trail, which has had over 100,000 visitor use days per year since 1994¹ and totaled 100,461 in 1997². This projection for the Mill Towns Trail is further supported by research conducted on the Heritage Trail. The Heritage Trail, a trail in Iowa of similar characteristics to the proposed Mill Towns Trail, reported 135,000 visitor use days in 1990³.

A five-year time span is used in this projection because both the Heritage and Cannon Valley Trail took 5-10 years to build up a usage rate of 100,000 or more visitor days per year. It is expected that the Mill Towns Trail from Faribault to Dundas and Northfield to the Village of Waterford will benefit from the current usage patterns of the Sakatah Singing Hills Trail. Therefore, it is expected that visitor use days per year will reach 100,000 in the minimum amount of time—five years.

¹ *Cannon Valley Trail Annual Reports 1994-1996*, February 1994-1996, Bruce Blair, Manager, Cannon Valley Trail, City Hall, 306 West Mill Street, Cannon Falls, MN 55009.

² *Cannon Valley Trail 1997 Annual Report*, February 1998, Bruce Blair, Manager, Cannon Valley Trail, City Hall, 306 West Mill Street, Cannon Falls, MN 55009.

³ "Rural renewals: Trails as economic development tools: The impact of rail-trails." Roger Moore, In: *Going Places: Work Shop Proceedings from the 4th National Rails-to-Trails Conference*, September 29-October 2, 1993, Concord, California, Rails-to-Trails Conservancy Publications.

Visit Related Spending

Daily Spending

Visit related spending includes the amount spent per visit to the trail on food, gasoline, trail fees, and other soft goods. In 1990 a survey of the Heritage Trail reported that the average amount spent per visit was \$9.21⁴. In the same year a survey of the Root River Trail in Southern Minnesota, reported that the average amount spent per visit was \$9.71⁵. Similar spending behaviors can be expected along the Mill Towns Trail. Averaging these numbers and adjusting for a 3% inflation rate per year, the projected average amount spent per visit in 1999 is \$11.98. In 1999 dollars, the projected annual benefit to local economies from daily user expenditures is \$1,198,000 at the projected rate of 100,000 visitor use days per year. Based on this expenditure projection and assuming a 6.5% state sales tax, the annual revenue to the State of Minnesota is \$77,870.

Overnight Accommodation Spending

In addition to daily expenditures the Mill Towns Trail will generate expenditures related to overnight visitors. In 1997, a survey of the Root River Trail showed that from Memorial Day to Labor Day trail users spent on average \$39.19⁶ per person per day. Of the \$39.19 spent, 36% or \$14.11 per person per day was spent on overnight accommodations⁷. Adjusting for a 3% inflation rate to the year of 1999 and assuming that the cost of overnight accommodations is constant during the year, an overnight expenditure rate of \$14.97 per person per day can be predicted for the Mill Towns Trail.

To determine the yearly expenditure on overnight accommodations it is necessary to determine how many visitors will spend the night as a result of the trail. For the Mill Towns Trail, the number of visitors that will use overnight accommodations is projected from 1993 Cannon Valley Trail records. These records show that 8% of the visitors in 1993 were from out-of-state⁸. It is assumed that while other visitors, both from the Metropolitan area and other areas of Minnesota, may require overnight accommodations, out-of-state visitation will give a baseline projection of total visitors staying the night. Therefore, at a projected rate of 100,000 visitor use days per year, the number of overnight accommodation is 8,000 and the projected annual benefit from expenditures on overnight accommodations is \$119,754 per year. Based on this expenditure projection and assuming a 6.5% state sales tax, the annual revenue to the State of Minnesota is \$7,784. These figures do not include the benefit to various local economies that will result from a 3% lodging tax.

⁴ See 3.

⁵ *The Economic Impact of Recreational Trails*, a study by the Department of Natural Resources, 1990.

⁶ *State Trail Use: Summary of Trail Use and User Surveys Conducted in 1996 and 1997*. August 1998. Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, Trails and Waterways Unit & Office of Management and Budget Services.

⁷ See 6.

⁸ Cannon Valley Trail Records, Bruce Blair, Cannon Falls, Minnesota, 1993.

Durable Goods Related Spending

In addition to trip related expenditures trail usage requires the purchase, or generates the incentive to purchase, durable goods. The 1990 survey of trail users on the Heritage Trail measured for expenditures on durable goods. The survey indicated that individuals were spending on average \$174.00⁹ per year on durable goods that could be used on a trail. These are expenditures that would not have occurred if the trail did not exist. For projections of the Mill Towns Trail, this number is adjusted to 1999 dollars by adding a 3% inflation rate per year. In addition, the number is reduced by two-thirds to account for out-of-state usage of the trail and the greater number of trails over which expenditures are spread in Minnesota. As a result, the projected average expenditure per person in 1999 is \$73.47.

Unlike the previous calculations of the total annual benefit to local economies from trail related expenditures, the total annual benefit of durable good expenditures is calculated using total persons visiting the trail instead of the total visitor day usage per year. This change is made to account for the fact that some visitors will visit the trail more than once. Based on 1993 records of the Cannon Valley Trail, where the average number of visits per person per year was 3.9¹⁰, the number of persons visiting the Mill Towns Trail at a projected rate of 100,000 visitor use days per year is 25,641 people per year. Therefore, the projection annual benefit from durable good expenditure is \$1,883,846. Based on this expenditure projection and assuming a 6.5% state sales tax, the annual revenue to the State of Minnesota is \$122,450.

Economic Development in Adjacent Communities

The economic development in communities adjacent to the trail has rejuvenated or strengthened the economic base of rural communities throughout Minnesota. Aside from spending on soft and durable goods, other indicators of economic development include an increase in stores, restaurants, motels, bed and breakfasts, bike rentals, antique stores, shuttle services, and other small businesses and services along the trail. All of these aspects increase the economic base and the number of full, part-time, and seasonal jobs in a city.

An example of economic development in communities adjacent to a trail is Lanesboro, Minnesota. Lanesboro is located on the Root River Trail, which opened in 1989. Before the trail opened, there was one place to stay in Lanesboro; now there are 25 and 12 nearby¹¹. One year after the trail opened the food and drink establishments increased by 84% and lodging in Fillmore County increased eight-fold between 1986 and 1992¹². In addition, other entrepreneurial ventures have been started: a theater and "The Old Barn". The theater commonly has sold out performances during the summer. "The Old Barn" is a barn that has been renovated to include a restaurant, lounge, store, banquet facilities, a

⁹ See 3.

¹⁰ Cannon Valley Trail Records, Bruce Blair, Cannon Falls, Minnesota.

¹¹ Camping and Hotels Guide, Lanesboro Visitor Center, Lanesboro, Minnesota.

¹² Seven Brandt, *Cities, Tourists Rode Boom of Bike Trails*, Minneapolis Star-Tribune.

large European style hostel (53 beds), and a large campground (130 campsites with water and electricity) on the site¹³.

Similar changes have occurred in Cannon Falls, the trail head of the Cannon Valley Trail. In this town the campgrounds are highly impacted by the trail. While one of the campgrounds initially fought the construction of the trail, it has subsequently built an access route to accommodate campers who use the trail¹⁴.

Intangibles

In addition to the economic benefits of a trail there are those benefits which are intangible. These include providing opportunities for people to improve their physical and mental health, providing a sense of place, generating community pride, providing alternative transportation opportunities, providing educational opportunities, protecting historic character, and providing habitat for native plants and animals. The Mill Towns Trail will protect various ecological communities, biomes, and species. These include prairie land, upland forest regions, fragile waterways, and rare animal species.

The Biological Survey of Rice County indicates that the trail will pass through rare mussel and turtle habitat¹⁵. Also, it will connect to a small section of trail between Northfield and Dundas that passes a native trout stream and a tax forfeit parcel that will be restored to native floodplain. As is the case with many trails, the right-of-way that it shares with or purchases from the railroad is native habitat. In these cases the trail serves to protect the railroad right-of-way from commercial, agricultural or housing development. One example is the Cannon Valley Trail. It continues to protect the habitat of rare plant species that were left untouched by the railroad. These species include one federally threatened species and a number of state threatened and concerned species¹⁶.

A long-term goal of the Mill Towns Trail is a connection with the Cannon River Wilderness County Park. Once this link is completed users will experience upland forests, shrub wetlands, deciduous woodlands and savannas, forest wetlands, prairies, emergent marshes, and open wetlands¹⁷.

COST

The fixed costs of the proposed trail include the cost of building nine bridges, the construction of 13 miles of trail, and the acquisition of 156 acres of land. For the Faribault to Dundas sections, two minor bridges are expected to cost \$50,000 each, a bridge over Wolf Creek is expected to cost \$75,000, and a bridge over the Cannon River is estimated at \$150,000. In the City of Faribault a pedestrian bridge over Highway 21, a

¹³ See 3.

¹⁴ Interview of Pat Anderson, Chamber of Commerce, Cannon Falls, Minnesota.

¹⁵ Natural Communities and Rare Species of Rice County, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, 1995.

¹⁶ Interview of Bruce Blair, Manager, Cannon Valley Trail, Cannon Falls, Minnesota.

¹⁷ See 15.

bridge over the railroad, and a bridge over the Cannon River are expected to cost \$900,000, \$75,000, and \$150,000, respectively. The section from Northfield to the Village of Waterford will require a 150-foot and a 50-foot bridge. Respectively, they are expected to cost \$175,000 and \$50,000. The construction of the trail is expected to cost \$1,560,000 (\$120,000 per mile) and the acquisition of land is estimated at \$265,000. Thus, total estimated cost of construction for the trail sections from Faribault to Dundas, and Northfield to the Village of Waterford would be \$3,500,000. Please note these costs are estimated in 1999 dollars to maintain constant dollar values and are summarized in Appendix 1.

Return on Investment for the State

A cash flow analysis of the costs and benefits of the Mill Towns Trail to the State of Minnesota indicates a 20-year pay back on the initial investment (See Appendix 2). This 20-year pay back period accounts for a two-year construction period and the five years before the trail reaches the projected 100,000 visitor use days per year. It is assumed that the first year that the trail is open the visitor use days per year will be 50% of the projected 100,000 and will increase annually by 10% for the next five years. This analysis was conducted in 1999 dollars to maintain constant dollar values and account for the cancellation of a 3% inflation and discount rate.

Construction Plan for the Mill Towns Trail

This construction plan outlines the vision, goals, description, timeline, and total cost of the proposed sections of trail from Faribault to the Village of Waterford.

VISION

Past discussions of the trail proposal have emphasized linking adjoining trails at Cannon Falls and Faribault. Such a facility will also provide a connection between public and semi-public open spaces serving three counties and five cities. A well kept secret of this portion of the Cannon River Valley is the brief period in history during which thirty mills were built and operated here. The mills served a variety of local needs within these agricultural communities and some were recognized well beyond this region. Mill Towns Trail is envisioned as a recreational investment that will link these communities again in a way that will ensure their continued vitality.

GOALS

1. Develop a trail route, which can be used for hiking, biking, inline skating, etc., which will link the Village of Waterford, Northfield, Dundas, and Faribault.
2. Provide a permanent trail right-of-way from Faribault to the Village of Waterford portion of the Mill Towns Trail.
3. Establish a recreational facility focused upon the communities along the proposed right-of-way.
4. Create an individual identity for the Mill Towns Trail which will distinguish it from both adjoining trails
5. Establish alternative right-of-way or loop options for trail users in each of the communities along this 13-mile segment of the Cannon River Valley.
6. Identify and provide access to public spaces, historic mill sites and both cultural and natural features along the trail right-of-way.
7. Identify trail head sites in each community to facilitate economic development related to this recreational feature.
8. Promote the trail as an integrating element in the regional open space system.

DESCRIPTION

Comprehensive

The primary component of the trail is a 10-foot bituminous surface with parking lots that are designed for expansion. Secondary components of the trail include the following:

- Construct trail heads with drinking water, toilets, and concessions,
- Implement signage to identify wildlife, plant materials, geography, and historical references,
- Create rest areas to take advantage of focal points and areas of interest.
- Create access to side trips to various locations, such as:
 1. Cannon Valley Wilderness Area
 2. Faribault and Northfield shopping areas
 3. Historical mills
 4. Camping areas
 5. Carleton Arboretum
 6. Nearby municipal and county parks

Trail Specifications

Clearing Width:	10 to 14 feet
Clearing Height:	8 to 10 feet
Tread Width:	8 to 10 feet
Bridge Width:	10 feet minimum
Surface:	2-inch thick bituminous with 3- to 4- inch base of compacted gravel.
Signage:	Consistent with State Trails

Details for Sections

City of Dundas to State Highway No. 3

<i>Segment</i>	<i>Description</i>
Mile 0.0	Intersection of Railway Street and Hester Avenue - Dundas Trail Head - A parking lot, canoe access, restrooms, drinking water, signage indicating location on trail, bike racks, canoe access and available facilities at trail head are recommended.
Mile 0.1	Historic Site - Archibald Mill - Interpretive signage, bench, and vegetation restoration are recommended.
Mile 0.15	Rest Area - Mill Park (existing park) Signage and benches are recommended.
Mile 0.2	Bridge - Existing bridge over the Cannon River - It should be made bicycle accessible and signage should be added.

Mile 0.35	Trail Intersects with 1st Street – Signage cautioning drivers and trail users should be added.
Mile 0.4	Intersection of 1st Street and Hamilton – Signage indicating the direction of the trail should be added.
Mile 0.5	Intersection of Hamilton and 3rd Street – Signage indicating the direction of the trail should be added.
Mile 0.6	Intersection of 3rd Street and Co. Rd. 20 – Signage indicating the direction of the trail should be added.
Mile 0.75	End of Section – Intersection with Highway No. 3

Red Line

<i>Segment</i>	<i>Description</i>
Mile 0.0	Beginning of section – Intersection of State Highway No. 3 and Co. Rd. 20 – Signage indicating location should be added.
Mile 0.1	Culvert
Mile 0.5	Cannon River Bridge – (Shared bridge with State Highway) Interpretive and location signage should be added.
Mile 0.82	Drive Way – Caution signage should be added.
Mile 0.85	Drive Way – Caution signage should be added.
Mile 0.9	Bridge – Wolf Creek – Interpretive signage should be added.
Mile 0.9-1.2	Low Land – Trail bed needs to be built up. Vegetation restoration and interpretive signage is recommended.
Mile 1.4	Bridge
Mile 2.05	Culvert
Mile 2.3	Bridge
Mile 3.2	End of Section - Road Crossing at the Intersection of State Highway No. 3 and Bachrach Avenue

Alternative Route 1: Yellow Line

<i>Segment</i>	<i>Description</i>
Mile 0.0	Road Crossing at the Intersection of State Highway No. 3 and Bachrach Avenue – Signage for road crossing and location is recommended.

Mile 0.2	Road Crossing – Signage for road crossing is recommended.
Mile 0.45	Road Crossing at the Intersection of Bachrach Avenue and 104th Street E. – Signage for road crossing and location is recommended.
Mile 0.9	Railroad Crossing at Comus – Signage for railroad crossing is recommended.
Mile 2.4	Bridge
Mile 4.0	Bridge
Mile 4.5	Bridge
Mile 4.8	End of Section – Intersection of Railroad and Acorn Trail

Alternative Route 2: Blue Line starting at Railroad

<i>Segment</i>	<i>Description</i>
Mile 0.0	Railroad Crossing at Comus – Signage for crossing is recommended.
Mile 0.35	Drive Way – Signage for crossing is recommended.
Mile 0.75	Drive Way – Signage for crossing is recommended.
Mile 1.0	Intersection of 140th Street E. and Acorn Trail – Signage for location is recommended.
Mile 1.25	Drive Way – Signage for crossing is recommended.
Mile 1.8	Point of Interest – Creamery – Interpretive signage is recommended.
Mile 1.9	Drive Way – Signage for crossing is recommended.
Mile 2.0	Drive Way – Signage for crossing is recommended.
Mile 2.1	Intersection of Acorn Trail and 150th Street E. – Signage for crossing is recommended and trail bed needs to be built up to avoid water.
Mile 2.4	Culvert
Mile 2.45	Drive Way – Signage for crossing is recommended.
Mile 2.6	Road Crossing – Gravel road – Signage for crossing is recommended.

Mile 3.1	Intersection of Acorn Trail and 160th Street E. – Signage for crossing is recommended.
Mile 3.64	Drive Way – Signage for crossing is recommended.
Mile 3.7	Drive Way – Signage for crossing is recommended.
Mile 4.05	Culvert
Mile 4.4	End of Section - Road Crossing

Alternative Route 3: Green Line

<i>Segment</i>	<i>Description</i>
Mile 0.0	Beginning of Section at Intersection of Bachrach and State Highway No. 3. – Signage that indicates location is recommended.
Mile 0.25-0.4	Low Land / Wetland – Area should be built up to allow users to pass through a wetland and pond area.
Mile 0.45	Drive Way – Signage for crossing over to grave pit is recommended.
Mile 0.7	Road Crossing over 145th Street E. – Signage for crossing is recommended.
Mile 1.0-1.3	Low Land – Vegetation management should be used to protect and restore habitat. Interpretive signs should be used.
Mile 1.3	Intersection of 150th Street E. and State Highway No. 3 – Crossing over 150th Street E. – Signage for crossing and location is recommended.
Mile 1.4	Culvert
Mile 1.4-1.6	Low Land – Trail bed should be built up to avoid wet areas.
Mile 1.6	Railroad Crossing – Signage for railroad crossing is recommended.
Mile 1.75	Railroad Crossing – Signage for railroad crossing is recommended.
Mile 1.8	Drive Way – Abandoned buildings. Vegetation management and restoration should be used to buffer view.
Mile 1.9-2.0	Trail Merges with Road – Avoiding wet/pond/marsh land. Vegetation management should be used to prevent run off into water area.
Mile 2.9	End of Section - Intersection of Acorn Trail and 150th Street E. – Signage that indicates location is recommended.

City of Faribault

<i>Segment</i>	<i>Description</i>
Mile 0.0	Beginning of Section – Signage for the crossing of Acorn Trail and for the entry into City of Faribault is recommended.
Mile 0.3	Intersection with City Road - Signage for a turn to the West.
Mile 0.7	Intersection with the Industrial Park Right-of-Way – Signage for a turn to the South is recommended.
Mile 1.5	Intersection with a Housing Development – Signage for a turn to the East is recommended.
Mile 1.9	Intersection with the Railroad – Signage for a turn South is recommended.
Mile 2.4	Road Crossing and Under pass – Signage for a turn to the East is recommended.
Mile 2.6	Rest Area – Entrance to North Alexander Park. Bike racks and signage for location is recommended.
Mile 3.0	Bridge – Cannon River
Mile 3.25	Bridge – Railroad crossing
Mile 3.75	Bridge – Pedestrian bridge over Highway 21.
Mile 4.0	Connection to the Sakatah/Singing Hills Trail – A Trail Head for the City of Faribault, parking lot, location signage, drinking water, restrooms, bike racks, and rest area are recommended.

City of Northfield to Waterford

<i>Segment</i>	<i>Description</i>
Mile 0.0	Beginning of Section – Intersection of 2 nd Street and State Highway No. 3.
Mile 0.3	Intersection of State Highway No. 3 and railroad – Signage indicating location and direction of trail is recommended. It is recommended that the trail be constructed in the railroad right-of-way starting at this point.
Mile 0.7	Bridge - 150-foot
Mile 1.3	Bridge - 50-foot
Mile 1.6–2.0	Sewage Disposal – Through this section the trail should leave the railroad right-of-way and follow the river to avoid the sewage disposal plant. Signage indicating location is recommended.

Mile 2.5	Village of Waterford – Signage is recommended indicating the location of the Village of Waterford.
Mile 2.7	Culvert
Mile 3.0	Bridge – Existing Iron Bridge near intersection of CSAH 47 and Canada Avenue – Bridge should be made bicycle accessible.
Mile 3.1	Trail Head - End of Section - At Iron Bridge – Parking lot, location signage, interpretive signage for the Iron Bridge, restrooms, and bike racks are recommended.

TIMELINE

<i>Task</i>	<i>Time Required</i>	<i>Sequencing</i>
<i>Land Acquisition</i>	n/a	First
<i>Topographic Mapping</i>	2 months	Second
<i>Planning</i>	6 months	Third
<i>Bidding and Contracting</i>	3 months	Fourth
<i>Construction</i>	16 months	Fifth
<i>Total</i>	27 months	

COST

Option 1: Dundas to Red Line to Green line to Blue Line to Faribault and Waterford Section

<i>Item</i>	<i>Cost</i>
Land Acquisition	\$265,000
Trail	\$650,000
Bridges and Culverts	\$1,707,000
Signage	\$10,000
Parking lots	\$150,000
Trail Heads	\$600,000
Rest Areas	\$1,000
Other	\$217,000
Total Cost	\$3,500,000

Option 2: Dundas to Red Line to Yellow Line to Comus to Blue Line to Faribault and Waterford Section

Item	Cost
Land Acquisition	\$265,000
Trail	\$650,000
Bridges	\$1,705,800
Signage	\$10,000
Parking lots	\$150,000
Trail Heads	\$600,000
Rest Areas	\$1,000
Other	\$138,200
Total Cost	\$3,500,000

Option 3: Dundas to Red Line to Green Line to Yellow Line to Faribault and Waterford Section

Item	Cost
Land Acquisition	\$265,000
Trail	\$650,000
Bridges	\$1,804,600
Signage	\$10,000
Parking lots	\$150,000
Trail Heads	\$600,000
Rest Areas	\$1,000
Other	\$19,400
Total Cost	\$3,500,000

Option 4: Dundas to Red Line to Yellow Line to Faribault and Waterford Section

Item	Cost
Land Acquisition	\$200,000
Trail	\$650,000
Bridges	\$1,853,400
Signage	\$10,000
Parking lots	\$150,000
Trail Heads	\$600,000
Rest Areas	\$1,000
Other	\$35,600
Total Cost	\$3,500,000

Trail Towns Trail

Proposed Sections:

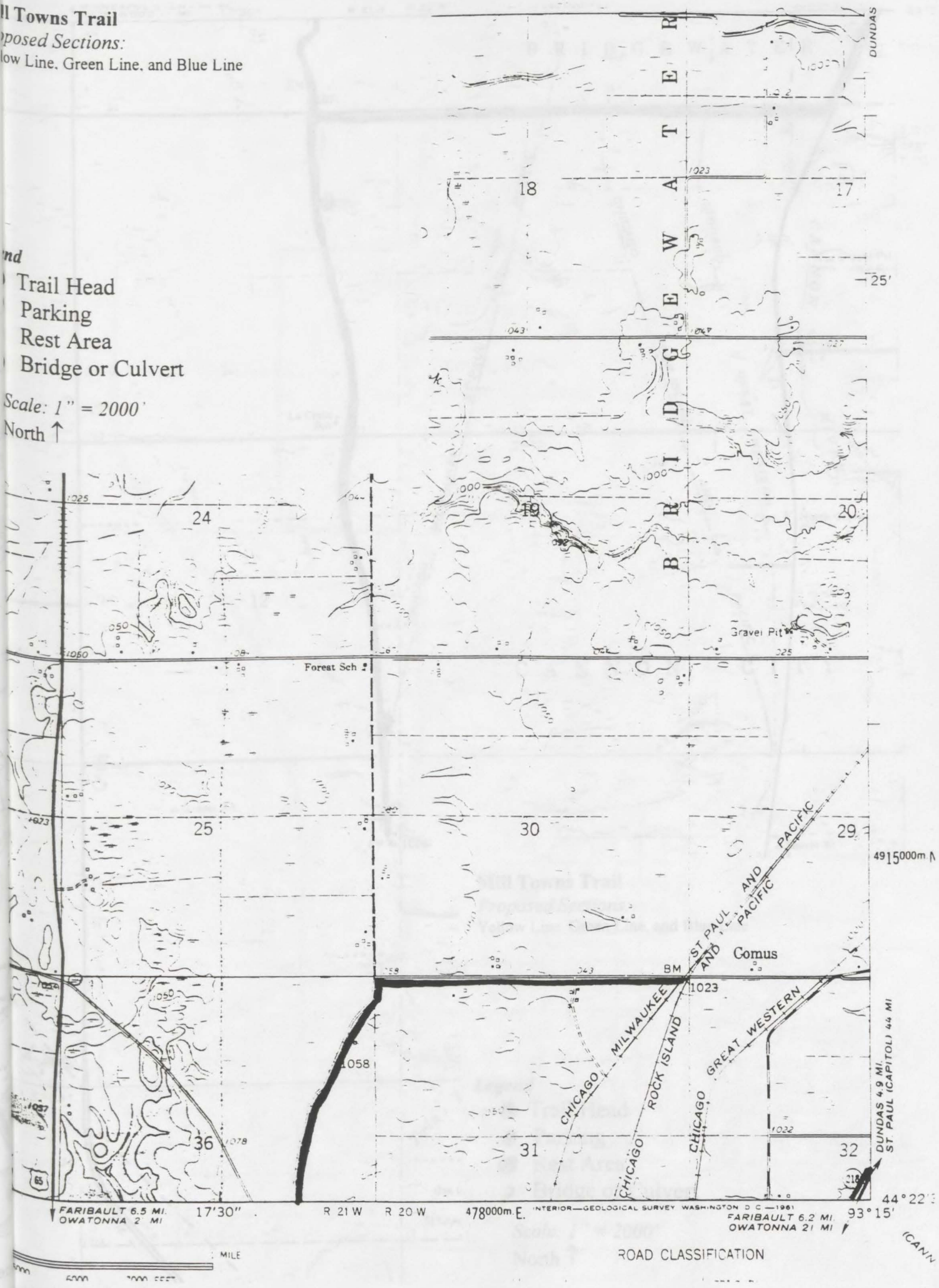
Low Line, Green Line, and Blue Line

and

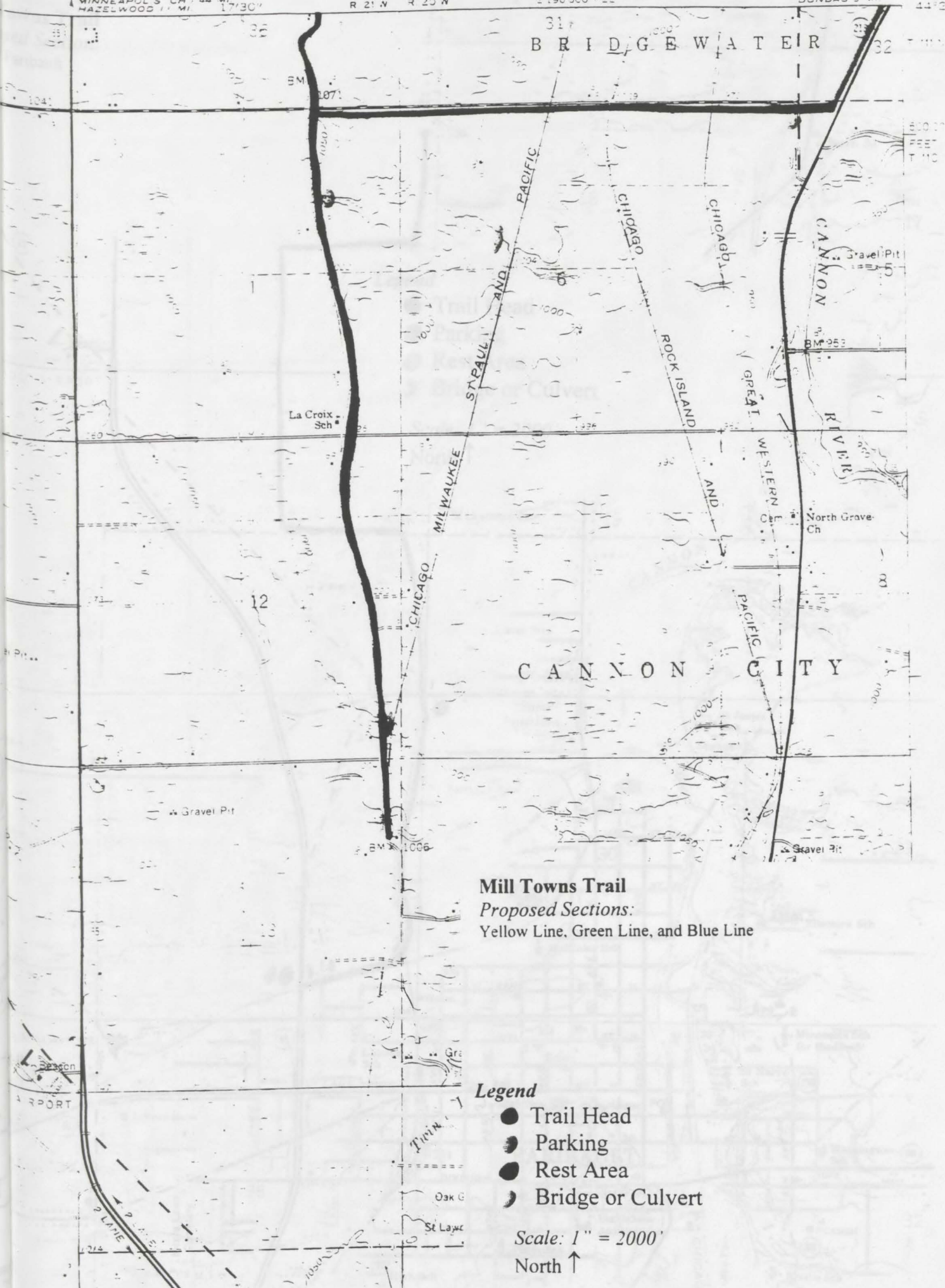
- Trail Head
- Parking
- Rest Area
- Bridge or Culvert

Scale: 1" = 2000'

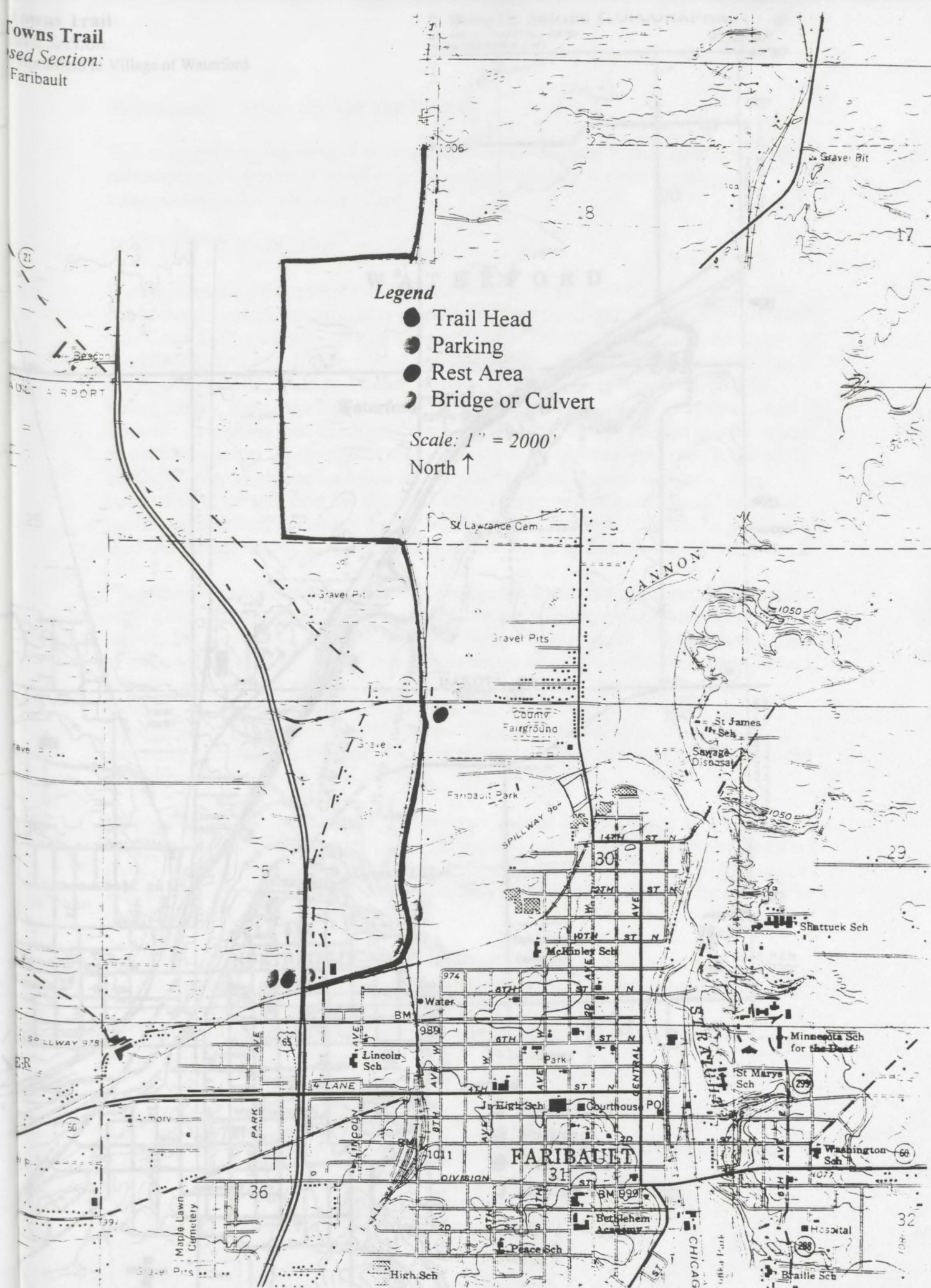
North ↑



ROAD CLASSIFICATION



Faribault



Towns Trail

osed Section:

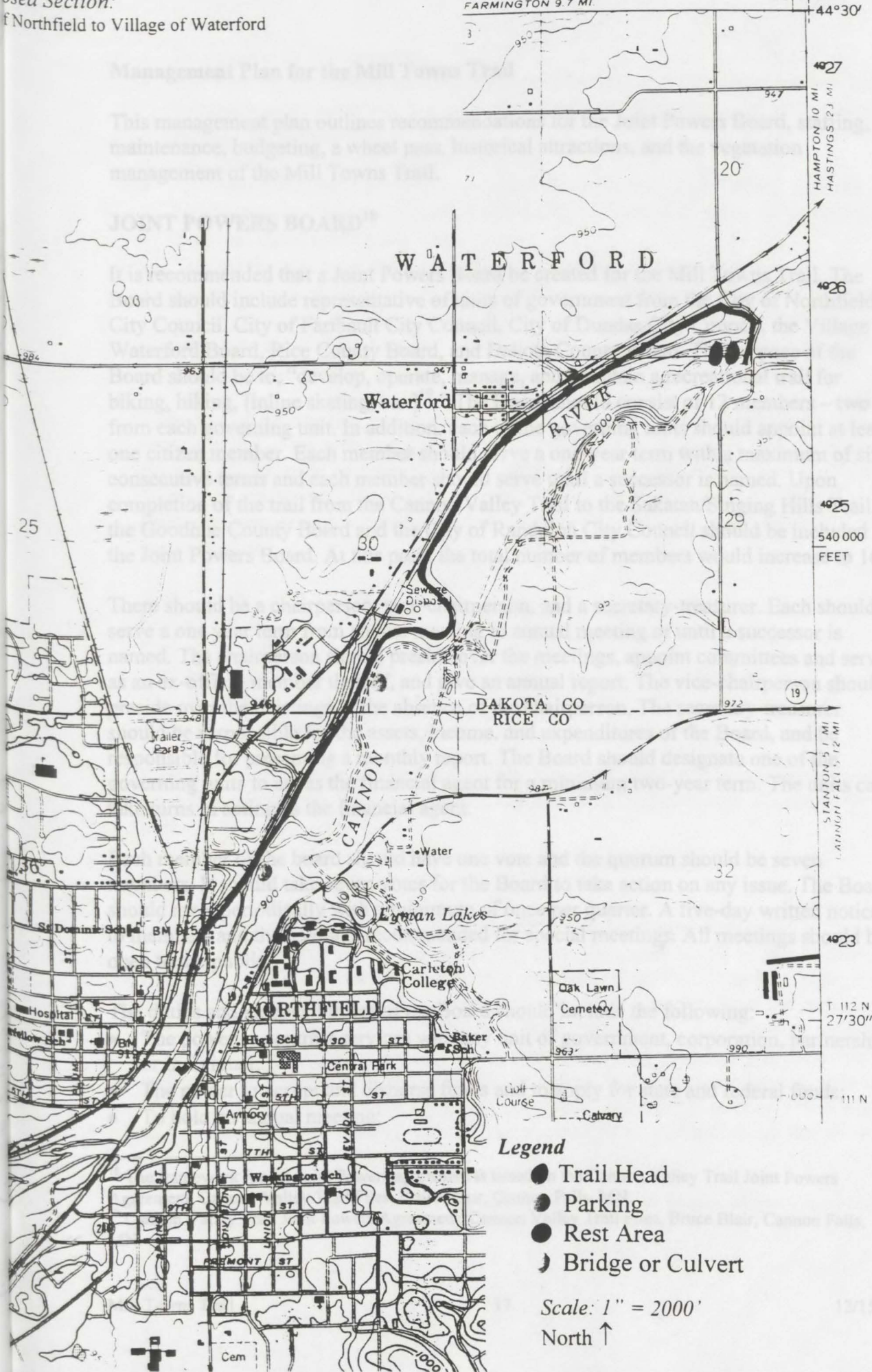
f Northfield to Village of Waterford

5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

ST PAUL (CAPITOL) 33 MI
FARMINGTON 9.7 MI

93° 07' 30"

44° 30'



Legend

- Trail Head
- Parking
- Rest Area
- ⌋ Bridge or Culvert

Scale: 1" = 2000'

North ↑

Management Plan for the Mill Towns Trail

This management plan outlines recommendations for the Joint Powers Board, staffing, maintenance, budgeting, a wheel pass, historical attractions, and the vegetation management of the Mill Towns Trail.

JOINT POWERS BOARD¹⁸

It is recommended that a Joint Powers Board be created for the Mill Towns Trail. The Board should include representative of units of government from the City of Northfield City Council, City of Faribault City Council, City of Dundas City Council, the Village of Waterford Board, Rice County Board, and Dakota County Board. The purpose of the Board should be to, "develop, operate, manage, and maintain a recreational trail for biking, hiking, [inline skating, etc.]"¹⁹. The Board should consist of 12 members – two from each governing unit. In addition, each of the governing units should appoint at least one citizen member. Each member should serve a one-year term with a maximum of six consecutive terms and each member should serve until a successor is named. Upon completion of the trail from the Cannon Valley Trail to the Sakatah/Singing Hills Trail, the Goodhue County Board and the City of Randolph City Council should be included in the Joint Powers Board. At this point the total number of members would increase to 16.

There should be a chairperson, vice-chairperson, and a secretary-treasurer. Each should serve a one year term from annual meeting to annual meeting or until a successor is named. The chairperson should preside over the meetings, appoint committees and serve as an ex-officio member thereof, and give an annual report. The vice-chairperson should preside over the meetings in the absence of the chairperson. The secretary-treasurer should be responsible for the assets, income, and expenditures of the Board, and be responsible for presenting a monthly report. The Board should designate one of the governing units to act as the financial agent for a minimum two-year term. The units can take turns in acting as the financial agent.

Each member of the board should have one vote and the quorum should be seven members. It should take seven votes for the Board to take action on any issue. The Board should meet periodically with a minimum of once per quarter. A five-day written notice to members and the media is recommended for special meetings. All meetings should be open to the public.

The duties and responsibilities of the Board should include the following:

- The power to contract services with any unit of government, corporation, partnership, or individual;
- The power to accept and disburse funds and to apply for state and federal funds;
- To hold an annual meeting;

¹⁸ The framework for the Joint Powers agreement is based on the Cannon Valley Trail Joint Powers Agreement, Cannon Valley Trail Files, Bruce Blair, Cannon Falls, MN.

¹⁹ Cannon Valley Trail Joint Powers Agreement, Cannon Valley Trail Files, Bruce Blair, Cannon Falls, MN.

- To produce an annual report;
- The authority to appoint an advisory committee and conduct public hearings and meetings as are necessary to provide full public participation in the development, planning, and operation of the trail;
- The authority to call emergency meetings;
- To adopt an annual budget and apply to Dakota County, Rice County, the City of Northfield, the City of Faribault, and the City of Dundas for approval of the budget;
- To be an equal opportunity employer;
- To staff the trail with full-time, part-time, seasonal employees; and
- To write a model ordinance for the supervision of the trail which would be presented to the governing units for adoption. The Northfield, Dundas and Faribault Police Departments, and the Rice and Dakota Sheriff's Departments should enforce the ordinance of the trail.

Financing of the ongoing operations and maintenance of the trail should be the responsibility of the governing units represented by the Joint Powers Boards. A calendar funding cycle should be established. For the trail section from Faribault to the Village of Waterford, which includes an existing piece of trail between Dundas and Northfield, the following percentages should be used to determine the financial responsibility of each governing unit:

Rice County	35%
Dakota County	15%
City of Northfield	15%
City of Dundas	10%
City of Faribault	15%
Village of Waterford	10%

It is recommended that as additional trail is completed, these percentages change to accurately reflect the percentage of trail that is within the boundaries of each governing unit.

STAFFING

It is recommended that one full-time manager and 1-2 seasonal employees, as required, staff the Mill Towns Trail. After one to two years the manager will be able to determine if additional help is necessary to cover the workload of the trail. If additional seasonal staff are considered necessary, it is recommended that volunteers from the community, members of the Friends of the Mill Towns Trail organization, and interns or work-study students be considered for staffing needs before adding a job category to the overall staffing plan. The staffing arrangement is consistent with recommendations made to the Cannon Valley Trail for its first years of operation²⁰. Additional staff may be needed as additional sections of the Mill Towns Trail are completed and trail usage increases.

²⁰ Cannon Valley Trail Comprehensive Plan, Charles Tooker and John Koepke, Charles Tooker and Town Planning, Cannon Falls Township, Goodhue County, Minnesota.

The full-time manager will be responsible for all aspects of the trail, including maintenance, staffing, budget management, communication with landowners, Joint Powers Board and users, and other tasks as necessary. Therefore, this individual should be able to communicate with both trail users and adjoining trail landowners. They must be able to inform adjoining landowners about trail issues and programs, and be able to address any difficulties that landowners are having with the trail or its users. In addition, this individual must be able to physically access the entire trail and answer questions users may have about available attractions along the trail.

It is recommended that the full-time manager be able to conduct a variety of tasks. S/He should be able to handle any necessary repairs efficiently and be dedicated to keeping the bituminous surface in useable condition throughout the spring, summer, and fall seasons. This individual should have the capacity to attend to light maintenance tasks and diagnose equipment problems as they occur.

MAINTENANCE²¹

It is recommended that maintenance for the trail and trail facilities be the responsibility of the full-time manager. It is expected that the majority of the maintenance for the trail will be related to the protection of and repairs to the surface of the trail. The manager will be responsible for assessing the condition of and repairing signage, checking for and repairing storm damage to the trail and its facilities, maintaining the appearance along the trail (removing litter), and general maintenance for facilities. Significant time, however, will be spent controlling, restoring, and protecting vegetation along the trail.

BUDGET

The Cannon Valley Trail Joint Powers Board maintains three separate accounts for the Cannon Valley Trail²². It is recommended that the Mill Towns Trail Joint Powers Board maintain three accounts, as well. They should be the Friends of the Mill Towns Trail account, a Maintenance account, and a Replacement Reserves account.

The Friends of the Mill Towns Trail Account

It is recommended that upon completion of the two sections of trail between Faribault and the Village of Waterford a membership-based organization be created called the Friends of the Mill Towns Trail. This organization should be under the direction of the Joint Powers Board. The purpose of this organization should be to assist the Board in developing and managing the trail. Members should be responsible for producing a newsletter, generating support for grants and political action and keeping the public informed of Trail events. Membership to the organization should be offered at an

²¹ The maintenance recommendations are consistent with those made in the Cannon Valley Trail Comprehensive Plan, Charles Tooker and John Koepke, Charles Tooker and Town Planning Cannon Falls Township, Goodhue County, Minnesota.

²² Cannon Valley Trail annual report, February 1998, Bruce Blair, Cannon Valley Trail, Cannon Falls, MN.

individual and family rate, \$6.00 and \$10.00 respectively. This would be consistent with the Cannon Valley Trail. Upon completion of all sections of trail between Cannon Falls and Faribault the existing Mill Towns Trail non-profit group should merge with the Friends of the Mill Towns Trail.

Maintenance Account

It is recommended that funds be placed in this account to pay for annual trail maintenance and for those events and activities that are not paid for by the Friends of the Mill Towns Trail, the Replacement Reserve account or capital improvement grants or appropriations. It is recommended that the revenue from the governing units be placed in this account. In addition, any revenue generated by the wheel pass, state ski pass, trail head concessions, and donations should be placed into this account.

Replacement Reserves

It is recommended that an account be maintained to serve as replacement reserves. These reserves would be used to buffer the expenses of unforeseen damage to the trail. Excess money from the Friends of the Mill Towns Trail and the Maintenance accounts should be placed in this account at the end of each fiscal year. This fund can be used for capital improvements, but it is recommended that capital improvements be made with grants or appropriations for other sources.

WHEEL PASS²³

A user permit system similar to the one used on the Cannon Valley Trail is recommended to supplement maintenance costs of the trail. This system charges individuals 18 and over \$2.00 per day to use the trail or \$10.00 per season. Discounts are offered for seniors, and group events. The pass is required for all users participating in activities that require wheels, i.e. bikes and inline skates.

It is recommended that passes be available for purchase at trail heads, trail connections with existing trail, at the parks and recreation departments of each city, and at parking lots. Some of these purchase points should be self-purchase stations, but the manager and seasonal staff should be available to sell and check for passes while working on the trail.

TRAIL USER ORIENTATION

The trail winds through many natural resources and points of interest, ranging from historic mills to rare turtles and native trout streams. Trail users should be oriented to these and other features of the trail through the use of signage, interpretive services and education. Users should be made aware of the heritage of the mill towns along the trail and the events that led to the defeat of Jesse James in Northfield. Interpretive services, signage, and education should be used to identify and increase the awareness of rare or

²³ Information regarding the Wheel Pass was collected through personal interviews with Bruce Blair and annual reports of the Cannon Valley Trail, Cannon Falls, MN.

threatened species along the trail. In addition, staff should have a comprehensive understand of the trail and maps should be available upon request.

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT²⁴

A detailed resource inventory should be conducted on the trail right-of-way and land adjacent to the trail. This should include plant and species, and native habitats or remnants. It is recommended that trail construction procedures be used that minimize disturbances to native plant communities and soils. Disturbed areas should be restored with native plant species. Once the trail is completed care should be used to protect rare or threatened species during maintenance procedures. In addition, native habitats should be expanded or introduced to minimize maintenance and the use of pesticides and to maximize biodiversity along the trail. In addition, where possible exotic species should be eradicated.

Plants native to the area should be used to screen unsightly areas, create a buffer between the trail and adjacent land, and assist in retaining snow along the trail. Where relevant vegetation should be placed in the right-of-way to buffer effects of soil erosion and run off on the Cannon Valley River. Trail construction should be timed to ensure that it doesn't interfere with spawning and migration of fish species where the trail crosses water. The growth and maintenance of wildlife habitat should be actively encouraged. One example would be the installation of bird houses at relevant locations.

COST OF MAINTENANCE

Projections for the maintenance costs of the Mill Towns Trail are consistent with those reported for the Cannon Valley Trail, annual report, February 1998. The supplies and services and charges lines are reduced because the proposed section of the Mill Towns Trail is half the length of the Cannon Valley Trail.

Expected Annual Expenses

Wages, Full-time	\$37,000.00
Wages, Part-time, seasonal	\$10,000.00
PERA, FICA, insurance, workman's comp.	\$8,550.00
Supplies	\$7,000.00
Services and Charges	\$10,500.00

Total	\$73,050.00
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²⁴ Vegetation recommendations are consist with those for the Cannon Valley Trail and the Harmony-Preston Valley Trail as presented in an interview with Bruce Blair, Cannon Falls, MN, October 1998 and the Harmony Preston Valley Trail, Draft Master Plan, August 1994.

Cost and Benefit for the Mill Towns Trail in 1999 Dollars

Benefits	Local	State
Projected Visit Related Spending		
<i>Daily Spending</i>		
Average Expenditure/Person/Day ²⁵	\$11.98	
Estimated Annual Benefit*	\$1,198,000	
Estimated Annual Revenue to State from 6.5% Sales Tax*		\$77,870
<i>Overnight Accommodations Spending</i>		
Average Expenditure/Person/Day ²⁶	\$14.97	
Estimated Annual Benefit*	\$119,754	
Estimated Annual Revenue to State from 6.5% Sales Tax*		\$7,784
Projected Durable Goods Related Spending		
Average Expenditure per Person ²⁷	\$73.47	
Estimated Annual Benefit ^o	\$1,883,846	
Estimated Annual Revenue to State from 6.5% Sales Tax		\$122,450
Estimated Total Annual Benefit	\$3,201,600	
Estimated Total Annual Revenue to State		\$208,104
Costs		
Trail Construction (\$120,000/mile)		\$1,560,000
Acquisition of Land		\$265,000
Bridges for Faribault to Dundas		
<i>Minor Bridge Construction (2 bridges at \$50,000/bridge)</i>		\$100,000
<i>Cannon River Bridge</i>		\$150,000
<i>Wolf Creek Bridge</i>		\$75,000
Bridges for the City of Faribault		
<i>Highway 21 Bridge</i>		\$900,000
<i>Railroad Bridge</i>		\$75,000
<i>Cannon River Bridge</i>		\$150,000
Bridges for the Northfield to the Village of Waterford		
<i>150-foot Bridge</i>		\$175,000
<i>50-foot Bridge</i>		\$50,000
Estimated Total Cost		\$3,500,000

²⁵ Based on the average amount spent per user per day on the Heritage Trail and Root River Trail in 1990. The values were averaged and adjusted for a 3% inflation rate per year. See 4 and 5.

²⁶ Based on the average amount spent on overnight accommodations per day on the Root River Trail in a 1997 survey. This number is 36% of the total amount spent by visitors per day and adjusted for a 3% inflation rate per year. See 6.

²⁷ Based on the amount trails influenced the purchase of durable goods by users of the Heritage Trail in 1990. The value was adjusted for 3% inflation per year and divided by 3 to account for the greater number of trails in Minnesota. See 3.

* (100,000 visitor use days/yr)

^o (25,641 visitors/year)

Cash Flow Projection of the Mill Towns Trail

Year	Balance on Investment by State (\$)	Projected Annual State Sales Tax Revenue			Annual Benefit to State (\$)
		Daily Spending (\$)	Overnight Accom. (\$)	Durable Goods (\$)	
1	3,500,000	0	0	0	-3,500,000
2	3,500,000	0	0	0	-3,500,000
3	3,500,000	38,935	3,892	61,225	-3,395,948
4	3,395,948	46,722	4,670	73,470	-3,271,086
5	3,271,086	54,509	5,449	85,715	-3,125,413
6	3,125,413	62,296	6,227	97,960	-2,958,930
7	2,958,930	70,083	7,006	110,205	-2,771,636
8	2,771,636	77,870	7,784	122,450	-2,563,532
9	2,563,532	77,870	7,784	122,450	-2,355,428
10	2,355,428	77,870	7,784	122,450	-2,147,324
11	2,147,324	77,870	7,784	122,450	-1,939,220
12	1,939,220	77,870	7,784	122,450	-1,731,116
13	1,731,116	77,870	7,784	122,450	-1,523,012
14	1,523,012	77,870	7,784	122,450	-1,314,908
15	1,314,908	77,870	7,784	122,450	-1,106,804
16	1,106,804	77,870	7,784	122,450	-898,700
17	898,700	77,870	7,784	122,450	-690,596
18	690,596	77,870	7,784	122,450	-482,492
19	482,492	77,870	7,784	122,450	-274,388
20	274,388	77,870	7,784	122,450	-66,284
21	66,284	77,870	7,784	122,450	141,820